Chapter 1. Introduction

In the summer of 2002, the Nelson\Nygaard consulting team developed three potential service options for shuttle service in the Greater Sedona area. The three scenarios, known as Minimum, Moderate, and Maximum, were described in an earlier memorandum submitted to the City ("Sedona Shuttle Scenarios). The three options were presented to the public in a newsletter that was delivered to every household in the City of Sedona in September 2002. This was followed by presentations by the team at a public Open House, an Advisory Committee meeting, a Steering Committee meeting, and League of Women Voters Forum which were all held in September and November 2002. In response to these solicitations of public comment, City staff received dozens of e-mails and letters, and a number of letters on the potential shuttle service were published in the local Red Rock News. The input in the public meetings and in written correspondence overwhelmingly favored the implementation of some type of shuttle service in Sedona, while a minority of the correspondents expressed concerns or opposition to any shuttle service operating in Sedona.

In addition to the consultant's efforts to solicit public input, members of Action Coalition for Transportation Solutions ("ACTS") collected dozens of informal surveys with teenagers and parents, met with representatives of the Sunset Village retirement community, the Chamber of Commerce, the Village of Oak Creek ("the Village"), Los Abrigados and Tlaquepaque. Input from these meetings was integrated into the development of the various operating scenarios.

The plan recommended in this report reflects a number of basic principles of transit service design. Shuttle service in Sedona must be based on various combinations of financial investment and supportive policies or restrictions. Greater financial investment allows for service improvements such as more frequent service, longer or more routes, longer hours of operation, and/or lower fares. Supportive policies such as parking restrictions and charges provide disincentives for driving and parking a car, and incentives for riding the shuttle. The combination of these factors effectively determines shuttle ridership, a key component of a successful shuttle system.

In weighing the implementation of these factors, the overall community benefit of enhancements must be taken into consideration. These benefits include improved experience for visitors to Sedona, reduced environmental impacts, increased pedestrian activity Uptown, improved quality of living for residents, benefits to Oak Creek through traffic and parking controls along the canyon corridor and SR 179, and benefits to the USFS by lowering the need for new and expanded trailhead and scenic vista parking areas (while still providing shuttle access to popular sites). As the scale of shuttle service increases, the community will also benefit from reductions in traffic congestion, which has become a source of increasing concern among many residents. It should be clarified at this point that while the shuttle will not, by itself, solve the pressing traffic congestion issues, it may help prevent them from getting worse. In order to fully address the congestion issue, shuttle service would need to be provided in conjunction

with the adoption of other measures, such as pedestrian improvements, better transportation demand management, off-highway road and pedestrian connections. These should also be viewed in the context of regional efforts to address transportation growth in the Verde Valley.

Investment and supportive policies need to go hand in hand. For example, if a small pilot system is selected, it would not be appropriate to implement policies that severely restrict auto use, since the transit system would not be able to provide an attractive alternative to the automobile. In the more robust alternative (termed "Maximum" in this report), increasing investment in the system creates a transit network that can be competitive with the automobile for certain trips, and supportive policies ensure that the maximum number of users will take transit. Higher levels of investment can attract riders without the recommended supportive policies, but ridership will be constrained as it is often difficult to affect behavior changes. This lower ridership will in turn translate into higher subsidy costs.

This document presents a Recommended Plan that provides a continuum of service options. Locating the ultimate "preferred plan" on this continuum will depend upon the presence of a variety of factors, each of which is detailed in this report. The Plan is presented in three parts: An introductory Minimal Operating Service (Phase 1); an Enhanced Service scenario, which includes a range of options or modules that can be implemented as part of Phase 1 or added based on the experience gathered in the first phase and funding availability (Phase 2); and a long-range Maximum Plan for optimal shuttle service (Phase 3). In addition, the Plan addresses the issue of what it will take for the service to be self-supporting. In addition to the supportive policies described in each level of service, there are a number of other potential enhancements that can be added to boost ridership, such as using the Red Rock Pass as an incentive to ride in lieu of fares, creative parking restrictions at the Chapel, Slide Rock, and other USFS sites, creating a more pedestrian-friendly environment Uptown, special events services etc. Each of these ridership enhancements involves tradeoffs in terms of additional cost, and is not included in the study's financial calculations.

Following the dissemination of the Recommended Plan to the Steering and Advisory Committees and the City Council, the consultants presented the Plan at the February 11, 2003 Council meeting. Based on input from that meeting, the team finalized the implementation plan that presents a range of reasonable options or phases and reflects the highest degree of consensus from public officials and the community.

In response to the issues raised by members of the public and further research by the team, the following modifications have been made to the original three scenarios:

- The scenarios assume less frequent service to reduce costs, particularly in the introductory service phase.
- Later start times are provided at the beginning of the day, with possible extension to later hours at the end of the day.

- A variety of potential enhancement tools and reduced service options are presented.
- An Uptown transfer location is built into each scenario to allow for transfers between the SR89A and the SR179 corridor.
- ADA paratransit requirements have been incorporated into the funding analysis.
- Three options for service to Cottonwood have been developed.
- Destinations such as charter schools and Posse Grounds Park have been included in the service area.
- An operating cost of $50 per hour has been assumed in the financial analysis (the previous range was between $45 and $60 per hour).
- An introductory service scenario that would limit the required City subsidy has been developed.
- A Maximum Scenario has been included that will be largely financed by parking revenues rather than significant local contributions.
- A Maximum Self-Supporting Scenario has also been added to determine the level of supportive policies that would be required to eliminate the need for subsidies.

Table of Contents

Table of Figures